

N. Vietnam to Free 20 Additional POWs

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon announced today 20 more American prisoners of war would be released by North Vietnam "in a few days," apparently as a good will gesture following Dr. Henry Kissinger's visit to Hanoi.

Defense Department spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim said the list of names was received early today and the Pentagon was busy notifying next of kin. He said the names would be made public once this was completed.

Included on the list are four Navy men and 16 from the Air Force.

The release of these 20 will bring to 155 the number of U.S. servicemen freed by the Communists in North and South Vietnam. Some 135 men were returned Monday and flown to Clark Air Base in the Philippines for processing.

Friedheim said details of the new releases would be arranged at the next meeting in Saigon of the four-party joint military commission.

The Pentagon was told by North Vietnam of the release through what Friedheim called "communication

channels." He did not specify what this meant but said the message apparently was associated with Kissinger's visit to the North Vietnamese capital.

Kissinger arrived today in Hong Kong after four days of talks with North Vietnamese leaders.

Under terms of the Paris peace agreement as explained in the past by Kissinger, the Communists are to release all 562 Americans held captive in four equal groups about every two weeks, with all to be freed by March 27.

Friedheim said it was not known how the pending release of 20 prisoners later this week would affect the number of POWs to be included in the next group.

Nevertheless, he said, "We here are delighted to have the imminent return of 20 more of our men held captive."

Friedheim also released the text of a message sent by Air Force Col. Robinson Risner, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, one of the first returnees that arrived at Clark Monday.

"As senior member of the group of

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returning POWs, I wish to report that after a good night's sleep and two good meals, we are ready for duty," Risner cabled Adm. Thomas Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In response, Moorer messaged from Washington:

"The receipt of your fine message was an inspiration to me as well as to the joint chiefs. I am extremely gratified—but not surprised—that the men you have led are ready now for duty.

"Men of your caliber and determination are always ready for duty. I personally thank God that you have returned safely and we are all so very proud that you and your fellow officers and men are on our team and have, in fact, never ceased performing duty under the most trying of circumstances.

Meanwhile, at Clark Air Force Base, the United States' newly released prisoners of war were signing Valentines today, swapping war stories and enjoying hot showers and American food as officials worked to prepare them for a quick trip home.

The 142 men who arrived Monday following their release in Hanoi and the jungles of South Vietnam woke just after dawn to begin their first full day of freedom.

The day was filled with medical checks, administrative processing, phone calls home and measuring for new uniforms to get ready for a flight, possibly Thursday or Friday, to Travis Air Force Base in California.

MEDICAL OFFICERS at Clark's 250-bed hospital — where the men, dressed in blue pajamas, were being processed — said the returnees were in high spirits and in generally good physical condition.

Despite the routine of processing, the wards were described as scenes of exuberance with the men enjoying the heady feeling of being back among their own after years in confinement. One senior officer described the men as "tigers."

DESPITE previous warnings the men would not want to talk about their prison experiences, medical officers said many stayed up until 4 a.m. exchanging tales about their confinement and joking about it.

At lunch Monday, they heaped their plates with servings of tenderloin steak, beef stroganoff, spiced apple sauce, mashed potatoes, buttered noodles, salad, apple strudel and chocolate cake. An officer who ate with them said he saw no instances of the men becoming sick from eating too much.

A returnee said he knew of no Amer-

ican POWs wounded by the massive B52 bombing raids on Hanoi last December but said one time a "concussion knocked a big hunk of plaster from a ceiling and it hit one guy on the head."

There were also stories of harsh treatment at the hands of North Vietnamese captors.

ONE MAN was made to lie in a rice paddy for more than 24 hours with only his face sticking out of the water. Another had salt rubbed in burn wounds he suffered when he was shot down. Another said he knew of cases where men were hung by their hands.

But a medical officer said there was no sign of bitterness about it all: "The men are just happy to be out and on their way home."

The medical officer said the men appeared to have suffered no serious weight loss but many complained of eye problems.

He said the three men brought back in stretchers were suffering from back and buttock injuries that made it painful for them to sit. He added there was no immediate sign the injuries were serious or permanent.

THE THREE were Capt. Thomas J. Klomann, 27, of Chicago, Ill.; Sgt. James R. Cook, 31, of Golden, Colo.; and Sgt. Roy Madden, Jr., 35, a native of Wilburton, Okla.

The officials said 29 of the men who returned were considered sick or wounded. No other names were provided.

One of the 27 men released in South Vietnam, civilian Richard G. Waldhaus, 25, of Pittsburg, Calif., asked to stay behind in Saigon after he was set free because he had friends there. Officials here said they expected he might come to Clark later in the week.

The freedom flights from Hanoi and Saigon Monday left 419 other Americans, mostly military personnel, in captivity in North and South Vietnam and Laos. They are scheduled to be released in three more groups at two week intervals. The next batch thus is due out around Feb. 26.

Two of the returnees underwent special processing and left for home tonight because of critical illness in their families. Maj. Glendon W. Perkins of Orlando, Fla., and Cmdr. Brian Woods of San Diego, Calif., were due in San Diego about 11 p. m. CST.

Woods, the son of retired Adm. Ralph W. Woods of Coronado, Calif., was added to the list of those to be freed when the North Vietnamese were told that his mother is critically ill.